

8.3 - THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS FROM SELECTED READINGS.

PLESSY V. FERGUSON

What was the Court to decide and what was the decision? How does this court case solidify the role of being black in America?

The court had to decide whether making a 13.5% man sit in the black car violated the 14th Amendment or not. The court decided that the Louisiana law was free to segregate to this extent and was in rights stated by the Constitution, proving that being black in America at that time frame meant you had unfair disadvantage. It was supposed to help maintain order rather than segregation.

RICHARD WRIGHT, 12 MILLION BLACK VOICES

1. Do you think World War I had an influence on African Americans and their migration to the North? How? Why do you think the migration slowed dramatically after 1928?

WWI had an influence on the Great Migration. As millions of men were drafted to the war, jobs opened up in factories. Additionally, the increase production to meet war demands created more jobs, creating an impetus for poor blacks to move North to fill these positions. The stock market crashed ("went BOOM") and spurred the Great Depression. This eliminated the opportunities that caused migration.

2. What does Richard Wright's description tell you about the experience of moving from the South to the North? How do you think the African American migrants felt? What were some of the challenges in attempting to create a better life? What were some of the differences between southern and northern life?

Things weren't as obvious and migrants were unsure of their surroundings. Migrants may have felt scared, confused, shocked, timid, anxious, excited but hesitant, exposed, awkward, auspicious yet reluctant. Finding a job yet lacking thorough education, housing, poor and underpaid work.

3. What were working and living conditions like in the North? Did it appear to be a better life? How? How was the treatment of blacks in the North and South similar? How was it different?

In the North, working and living conditions were much better. Workers were allowed more rights in the North than they were in the South (for black people; whites are the same.) It appeared to be a better life since there was no legal slave trade in the North. Slavery did not exist so they had better conditions and were able to do more and have better jobs and even more respect in many cases. Blacks still were not valued in the way whites were and still segregated and mistreated sometimes, just like the South, but the difference was they were considered free people rather than slaves like in the South.

LANGSTON HUGHES, "MONTAGE OF A DREAM DEFERRED"

1. In the sixth line, whose feet do you think the author is talking about? What are they doing?

The feet of African Americans are what are being referred to as far as whose feet they are. They are tapping to the beat of a questionable song. The built up emotions of a dream long deferred may challenge the stereotype that existed after WWII describing blacks as happy despite segregation and widespread racism.

2. What do the narrator's inner feelings appear to be? What is his outward persona? What does the poem tell you about the life of the narrator?

The narrator's (Hughes) inner feelings are reflected through the "Daddy" in "Dream Boogie" by challenging the stereotype. However, his outward persona may be closer to the child's voice by remaining outwardly passive and happy, hiding feelings of resentment and possible frustration.

3. In "Harlem," what are the essential two outcomes of a dream deferred? Which do you think unfolded? Do you think Langston Hughes had a feeling about the nature of the future?

Hughes suggests that a dream deferred either "sags like a heavy load" (burdening those who carry it), or it explodes, likely violently or in a way that releases some pent-up aggression and frustration.

ANNE MOODY, COMING OF AGE IN MISSISSIPPI

1. How does this document exemplify the planning involved in the civil-rights movement?

The planning worked like clockwork. It repeated itself. The document explains to us what the civil rights movement was from a personal point of view and it shows what kind of organizations were made in order to create a better opportunity for black to be treated fairly.

2. What did non-violent demonstrators have to endure? What qualities do you think the demonstrators had? Do you think they had any special skills or training? Who were the different people who sat at the counter? What do these facts tell you about the movement?

They had to endure the bullying and harassment from other people. Even though they weren't physically fighting, they had to face physical violence from people that did not agree with them. These demonstrators often displayed courage, patience and bravery in order to speak their mind in such a way and not lose control over what violent rebellions had to say. There were many people involved in this movement and they were not just black. They were Middle Eastern, white, and many different nationalities.

3. Why do you think the police did not intervene? Do you think they had an obligation to do so? What does this tell you about the role of much of the local law enforcement during this time? Was this fair?

The police probably didn't want to look like part of the mob or take sides because no matter who they pick sides with, it could end violently for them. This tells us that the law enforcement was not flawed and not very safe or didn't do very well with enforcing laws, which was not fair.

JOHN LEWIS, ORIGINAL TEXT OF SPEECH TO BE DELIVERED AT THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL

1. What part of the speech do you think the other civil rights leaders wanted John Lewis to change? Why? Do you think it was a wise idea?

John Lewis may have been pressured to seize reference to a possible revolution. It suggests that Lewis is calling for open rebellion and active resistance which goes against what King and other leaders were promoting. I think it was

2. Why do you think John Lewis did not support the civil-rights bill? What issues did it not address? What examples does he use to make his point?

Lewis suggests that the bill does not adequately meet the needs of American Americans by neglecting to address the protection against harassment and measures to increase voting rights.

3. John Lewis asked, "I want to know, which side is the Federal Government on?" Which side do you think the government was on? Did it change? Cite evidence to support your opinion.

The side I feel that the government was, in my opinion, the side of the white people. African Americans were treated very unfairly back in this time and eventually the feeling changed but it took a little while for them to take effect.

MALCOLM X, "MESSAGE TO THE GRASS ROOTS"

1. What is the overall message delivered by Malcolm X?

He was disappointed with our nation and wished we would work more together.

2. Do you think Malcolm X makes a strong argument against the justification of violence against blacks? What examples does he cite?

3. How did Malcolm X attempt to unite African Americans in his speech?

MARTHA HONEY, LETTER FROM MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SUMMER

1. How does Martha Honey describe her experience as an activist? What is different about her experience compared to that of black activists?

She felt ashamed to be a white person and she wasn't really enjoying it because she could go home since she was white and blacks couldn't no matter how scared they got. It was unfair to them.

2. What does Honey's letter tell you about the state of Mississippi?

It appears that Mississippi was a very segregated state and treated black people like they were not people at all and even though the white people lived a great life, blacks were forced to do what they were told to do by whites.

3. Is Honey proud of her contributions? Why, or why not?

Yes; accomplishments were worth while and proved helpful

No; more to be done and she was almost glad to have to go home

TESTIMONY OF FANNIE LOU HAMER

1. What makes someone a first-class citizen? Why? What is so important about being able to vote?

A first class citizen is someone who exercises their responsibilities and duties such as voting.

2. What risks did African Americans face when attempting to register or after they registered?

African Americans risked violent retaliations and lynching just for trying to vote or be an active citizen of the United States.

3. Was Fannie Lou Hamer's arrest justifiable? What was the treatment of her like?

I feel that what they did to her because she was trying to be a true American citizen was completely unnecessary. Treatment for her was not fair because she was just trying to perform her duties as an American citizen.

TESTIMONY OF RITA L. SCHWERNER

1. How were Rita Schwerner and her husband treated because they were white activists? Would you say they faced discrimination? Give examples.

They were treated almost as badly as the slaves were, and I supposed you could say they did face a form of discrimination because it was socially unacceptable at that time to come to defend or go against slavery. It wasn't proven at the time, but it is proven now that Rita's husband was killed because of activism.

2. According to Schwerner, how did police use fear and intimidation? What would you do if you were an activist facing these tactics?

The police threatened Schwerner and treated her very unfairly according to what happened to her. If I were an activist, I would be very discouraged and disappointed with our nation for what they are doing because of our beliefs. America wouldn't be the same and I would definitely have a different view on the way Americans really feel and act.

3. Why did Schwerner go to see the governor? What was his response? Why do you think he responded the way he did?

The governor responded the way he did because he was afraid to pick a side because he feared that either way, he could be mobbed or attacked and his life would be in danger.

ALICE WALKER, "ONCE"

1. Which section of the poem most struck a chord with you and why?

When she was talking about the little girl getting run over and being accused of being in the way.

2. What did the poem tell you about African Americans' view of themselves?

African Americans seemed very down on themselves and felt like they were really mistreated and felt like they weren't a whole person or looked at as people, but more like dummies or robots. They knew they weren't treated equal and that made them depressed and angry.

SANDRA A. WEST, "RIOT! - A NEGRO RESIDENT'S STORY"

1. Why would African Americans riot and burn their own neighborhood? What was being expressed? Do you think rioters had a goal?

Because they were mad about the way they were being treated and had enough so they were going to make a point to try and make a point.

2. Why did families who were fearful not leave their neighborhood?

Even though they had fear, they felt they had nothing to lose and were willing to risk whatever they had left to make a point and be able to get noticed.

3. Do you think rioting was an effective form of protest? Why, or why not?

Rioting is both a negative and positive effect in regards to getting their point across and got attention. They were successful in getting their point across but they also caused more chaos and turmoil among themselves and the city.